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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

APPROPOS OF CHOLERA.

ASIATIC cholera, so called from the fact that it is a disease endemic in parts of Asia, is a malignant disease of the blood, caused by the presence in the intestines of bacilli in countless myriads. This bacillus, discovered by Koch, and named the "comma" bacillus because it resembles the comma in shape (,) increases by segmentation; that is, it divides itself into two parts, each becoming of full size and dividing again. The bacilli are given off in the discharges from the bowels, and cholera may only be caught by taking the bacilli into the mouth and stomach in some way. They are infinitely small, so small that I have no words in which to convey an idea of their lack of size. They may be carried in the dust blown about the street, but the media through which they usually reach human beings are the water drunk or the food eaten.

The spread of cholera, it being a purely infectious disease, and requiring the bacilli to be swallowed, is through the persons infected or suffering from it or through their infected clothing. How long the bacilli will remain active in a dry state is not definitely known, but for practical purposes I can say that any clothing exposed to infection is dangerous so long as the bacilli have not been killed. Cholera, like other diseases we call epidemics, spreads along the ordinary routes of travel. Each person infected becomes in turn a centre of infection for others, and the disease would therefore move from country to country like the widening circles in water were there no travel whatever. The universal movement of to-day, however, hastens its march greatly.

While cholera is endemic in Asia, and always makes its appearance during such great religious festivals as the pilgrimage to Mecca or the festival of Juggernaut, it does not travel to Europe every year. This is because the disease does not always acquire that virulence which will develop a germ of sufficient malignity to travel. Why this should be so I do not know, but all facts point to the conclusion that sometimes the germ or bacillus is of greater potency and strength than at others, and this is true of all infectious diseases.

The present outbreak appears to have had its origin at Meshed, in Persia, a resort of Mohammedan pilgrims second in importance only to Mecca. As the pilgrims dispersed they carried the disease with them, and had any country except Russia been in the line of march, cholera would have been kept out of Europe. It travelled to Baku, thence to Astrakhan, then up the Volga, infecting the cities on the bank, until it reached Nijni-Novgorod at

the time of the great fair. From there it went to Moscow. It is also approaching Europe by way of the Black Sea. The Austrian and Prussian authorities are on the alert, and have established a most rigid quarantine. It is probable, too, the disease exists in a mild form, although the distress caused by the famine in Russia will probably have the effect of intensifying its malignancy. It is doubtful whether the disease reported from Paris is cholera. I am inclined to think it is cholera morbus, which is also infectious, and therefore a germ disease.

The practical question which concerns us in this country is the danger to which we are exposed. This is not very great. In the first place the fact of the existence of the disease is known, and in such matters to be forewarned is emphatically to be forearmed. Second, the period of incubation of cholera is very short, being from a few hours to three days. Consequently, should any person infected board one of the ships coming here the disease would manifest itself before the arrival of the vessel. The advantage of this is obvious; no vessel could arrive here with cholera on board without the quarantine physicians finding or hearing of cases. The outbreak of typhus which occurred in the city some months ago was produced by people who, owing to the long incubation of typhus, passed quarantine while apparently well. Of course, the germs might come here in rags, but the chances that rags have of passing without disinfection are extraordinarily small nowadays. Third, to confine myself to New York City, the water supply is at present very good. The water shed of the Croton is uncontaminated now, and will remain so until the population becomes much denser. Ultimately New York must get its water elsewhere, for, should the water shed of the Croton become densely settled, typhoid fever and cholera would become serious menaces to the people who use the water. Generally speaking the water supply of American cities is exceedingly pure. As water and food are the carriers of the germs, it follows that these must be carefully watched should the disease find a lodgement here. It is most fortunate that the cholera bacillus can neither stand heat nor cold. A few days of sharp frost will stamp an epidemic of the disease out. Food must be eaten while hot and fresh from the fire, and water, in cholera times, must be boiled. The extraordinary freedom from cholera which has always marked the Chinese of the southern provinces of the Celestial Empire, living as they do amid almost typical cholera conditions, and with a disregard of sanitation almost sublime, has been credited to the universal habit of tea drinking. In other words, the fact that Chinese never drink water which has not been boiled probably accounts for that other fact that there are any Chinese left to drink anything. While this is putting it strongly, it is not an unpardonable exaggeration.

Should the cholera come here we must then see to it that all germs are destroyed by heat before taking them into our bodies. It is necessary, too, that the most absolute cleanliness, especially of the hands, be observed and particularly for those who handle food. The germs may easily be found on such things as straps in cars, balusters on public stairways, door knobs, money, and the like. I cannot too strongly state the fact that the chances of infection, were the cholera to break out to any extent, would be almost innumerable and that no amount of precaution, therefore, can be too great. A person whose hands in any way come in contact with the discharges of a cholera patient could easily infect hundreds of people by leaving the bacilli where they could attach themselves to other hands. There is another

danger, and one which is serious, existing in the common house fly. It has been shown that these insects can carry the germs about with them. One reason why food should be eaten hot from the fire in cholera times is because then flies will not light on it and all bacilli on it prior to cooking are killed by the heat.

In case a person is attacked by diarrhoea during a cholera epidemic two dangers are to be avoided. The first is that of a senseless panic; it is by no manner of means certain he has cholera. At the same time we must proceed as though he had in order to avoid the second: that of infection. All discharges must be disinfected at once. For this purpose a solution of seven grains of corrosive sublimate to a pint of water must be kept. It is well to have a large demijohn of this made up and to use it freely. Not only must all the discharges be covered with it, but the patient and any person coming near the infected matter must wash the hands thoroughly in it. In a word, everything in any way exposed must be disinfected. Of course at such a time a physician would be called in at once, and to him must be left the treatment of the case. This article is not designed as a treatise on the treatment of cholera.

So far as the care of the health goes, were cholera to break out, it is not difficult to give directions. Fortunately for us when we are in health we can resist disease germs even if they are taken into the system. The care for ourselves during a cholera outbreak is, therefore, merely that care we should properly take at all times. We must take plenty of sleep, a fair amount of exercise, eat very plain food thoroughly cooked, drink water that has been boiled and allowed to cool in bottles on ice, let raw fruit alone, wear light flannels, and in general lead as rational a life as we may. No precaution against cholera or any other disease equals perfect health, for with this we can defy it.

It is well here to say a word about liquor. Many people believe that brandy, if taken freely enough, will save them from cholera. That brandy has its uses I would be the last to deny, but, assuredly, one of these is not drinking it all the time when there is an epidemic of cholera to the fore. To those who have this idea it is far more dangerous than the disease, and for this reason: The one thing necessary is to keep the health as perfect as possible. Now every one knows that constant drinking weakens the person who drinks and deranges the stomach, and that weakness and disordered digestion invite diseases.

Cholera may be of the mildest possible type, so mild that a person is not confined to the house for more than a day or two, or it may kill within one hour of the attack. It is a disease which cannot be trifled with in any way, and were there an outbreak of it in the city, a physician should be consulted the moment the patient is sick. It is better to make twenty mistakes than to neglect one real case. It is also necessary in cholera time that when a person is attacked with any sickness, especially one accompanied by diarrhoea, that the patient, with the nurse, be quarantined at once. Neither should mingle with the other persons in the house. All cloths, vessels, or anything else from the sick room must be placed in the disinfecting fluid described before being handled by others. No amount of precaution is too great in this regard.

Finally it is well to notify the health officers of the place at once. This notification will in no way injure the patient, while it may be the means of saving the lives of that patient's fellow citizens. To my mind when such

diseases as cholera, typhus, or yellow fever are among us, he who, from a selfish fear of inconveniencing himself, hides the disease from the health authorities is morally guilty of all that may result from his act.

CYRUS EDSON.

LYNCH LAW IN THE SOUTH.

IN THE course of recent events, public attention has been pointedly called to the extent to which the criminal jurisdiction of the courts in the South has been superseded by what is commonly styled Lynch Law. Lynching is prevalent enough in other parts of the Union, but for causes quite obvious when considered, it has lately been more prevalent in the South than elsewhere. Consequently, it is not at all surprising that partisan hostility has availed itself of this fact to again seek to kindle the old expiring fires of sectional misconception and discord.

The effort will not be successful. If lynching is more prevalent in the South than elsewhere, it is because the negro population of the Union is congested in the South mainly, and because, in the last year or so, the negro there has violated the chastity of white women with such appalling frequency, and under circumstances so unutterably shocking to human nature, that the white race there has been goaded into a degree of excited feeling for which no occasion has existed in other parts of the Union. This is why it is that the attitude of the country at large towards lynch law in the South is so tolerant. Nothing can justify lynching, under any conditions not totally abnormal, no matter how heinous the crime, or unmistakably guilty the accused, or orderly the execution, or universal the approbation of the community. But the human heart is passionately wedded to home and the family and to female purity, at once their vital breath and crowning grace.

Of all the crimes that stir the profoundest emotions of the human breast, none are comparable, in this respect, with the grosser crimes against female virtue. In spite of every restraining precept, it is rarely that a jury, in any civilized country of the world, can be found to convict even the husband who has killed the seducer, who has inflicted upon him no injury to which the wife herself was not a voluntary party. What, then, shall we say of the feelings awakened by an outrage surpassing all others in the overwhelming and lasting shame and humiliation that it carries along with it?

But the act itself is not all. Suppose the prisoner to be indicted and arraigned.

How ten-fold odious and maddening does the crime become when it recurs in a community almost with the regularity of the morning newspaper! And yet it is no exaggeration to say that such for some time past has been the case in the South. Neither age nor youth has been spared. Between the 29th day of April and the 8th day of June in the present year, outrages by negroes upon white children were reported in the public press from Florida, Virginia, Maryland, Mississippi and Arkansas.

So blindly irrational and overpowering appears to be the criminal impulse, too, that danger of detection and absolute assurance of an awful fate, in case of detection, have but little deterrent force. For instance, a short time since a negro was lynched, in a small village in Virginia, for an assault upon a white woman, and lynched under circumstances calculated to strike terror into every depraved mind. Yet only a brief period afterwards a similar assault was committed in the same village by another.